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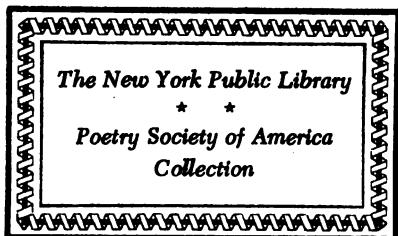
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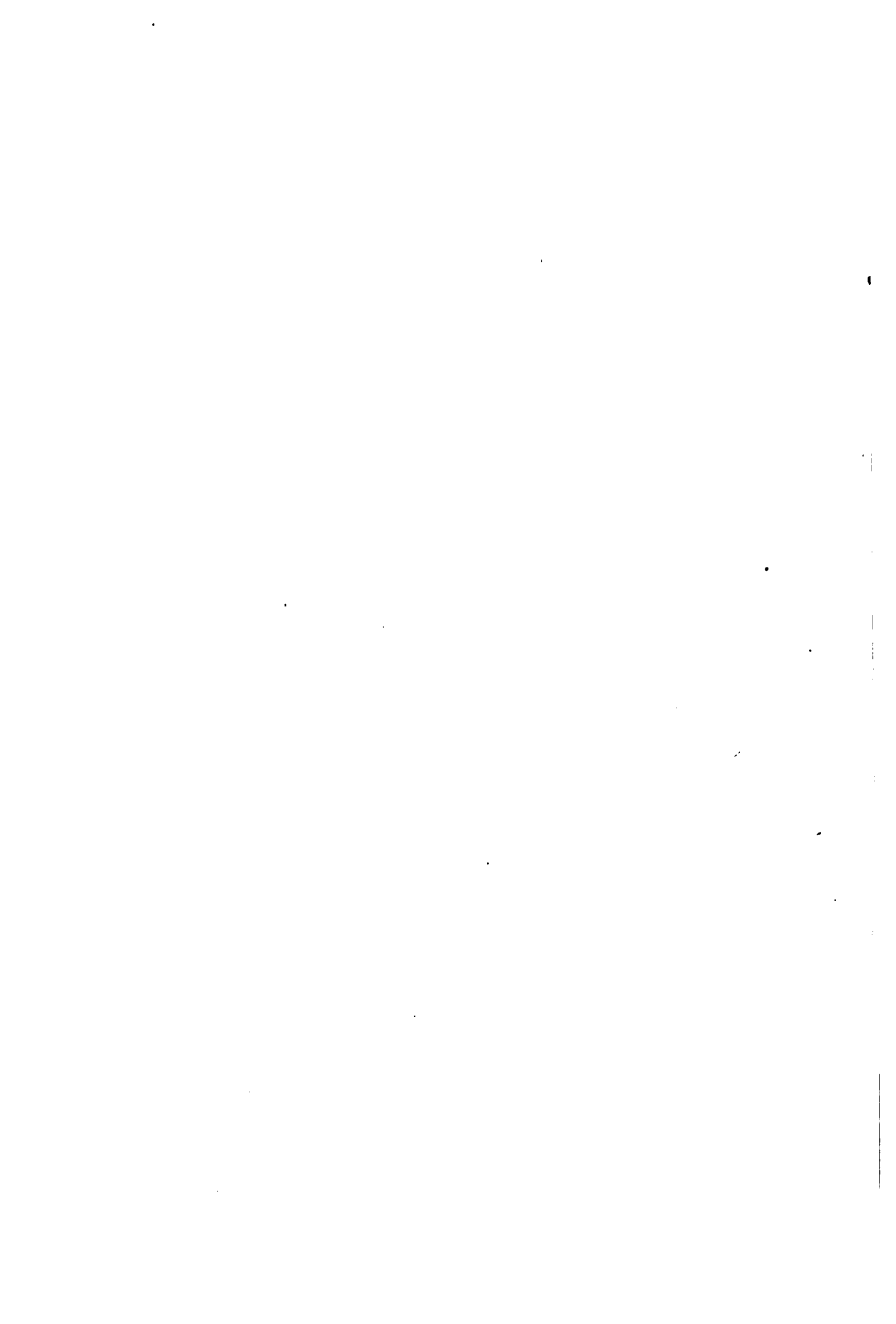
To Zeddy Spryger

from

Arthur Dawson Ficke

in token of the pleasure of  
first meeting - February 1920

NBI  
Ficke



## AN APRIL ELEGY

***BY ARTHUR DAVISON FICKE***

**SONNETS OF A PORTRAIT-PAINTER**

**MR. FAUST**

**THE BREAKING OF BONDS**

**THE MAN ON THE HILL-TOP**

**TWELVE JAPANESE PAINTERS**

**THE HAPPY PRINCESS**

**THE EARTH PASSION**

**FROM THE ISLES**

**AN APRIL ELEGY**

# AN APRIL ELEGY

BY

ARTHUR DAVISON FICKE



NEW YORK AND LONDON

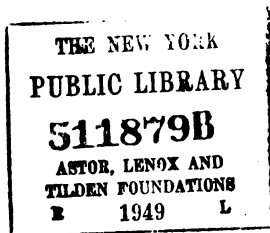
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## **AN APRIL ELEGY**



## AN APRIL ELEGY

### I

“**O**VER my organ-keys in the twilight  
If I but let my wandering fingers  
Stray at their will, would they not, out of muted  
Notes and broken sequences and diminished  
Chords, evoke a ghostly echo of you? —  
Chanting slowly in the ambiguous darkness  
More than a resurrection of our old choral,—  
Freeing at last the shadowy fugue beyond you  
That I divined and loved, but never knew?

“*Sidonian lute!*  
*Still tremulous with music. . . .*  
*Sidonian lute!*  
*Whose breasts were lilies. . . .*

“Over these keys, growing dim in the twilight,  
Slowly, confusedly, wander my fingers,  
Impotent now to build, from the muted  
Notes and broken sequences and diminished  
Chords, an echo of you.  
Chanting solemnly now in the deepening darkness  
Rises the host of implacable memories.  
Into the darkness dies the wandering music,  
And I remember the poignant you alone.”



## II

One April night, when the slow drip of rain  
Like a remote accompaniment  
Upon her window-pane  
Played ghostly threnodies,  
And they were very close, while in the trees  
Outside the window the cold arc-lights set  
A thousand stars  
On branches gleaming wet,  
While the belovèd mystery of the dark  
Swept like a curtain over the soiled park,—  
Then, as her head  
Upon his shoulder rested  
Like a bird nested,—  
But on that night indifferently,— then he said:  
“ If you should die,  
You who have made me happy and tortured me  
With your inscrutable soul’s perversity,  
Then I  
Would mark your memory with such wreath of song  
As to no other woman might belong  
Through all of history.”  
And in the rapt indifference of her face,—  
For at that hour her love was far away,—  
A little mocking tenderness found place;  
He heard her say:

"Poor player! I would die,—save that the test  
Would rob you of more rest  
Than even my perversity of now.  
Dear dreamer! painfully that vow  
Would haunt your sleep forever.  
No, for your sake I will forbear to sever  
The thread of life. And though I cannot smile  
With quite the madness that I once could use,  
It seems that I must choose  
To save you from your oath, and live a little while. . . ."

The rain came down  
Quietly, steadily, over the town.  
They sat, silent; he dreaming of the lays  
Which in fantastical coronal of praise  
He would have woven for her were she dead.  
And then she fell asleep, her light smooth head  
Upon his shoulder. . . .  
Tonight the rain  
Beats on his window-pane —  
The fierce rain of a Spring but one year older. . . .

## III

*" Now Paris, grey with April, as though November  
Instead of Spring were here,  
Hushes its happy voices; to my ear  
Come only echoes; and as I remember,  
In sudden gleams there rises, swirls, and passes  
Image on image of our tarnished fate.  
Belovèd ghost,— under your rain-swept grasses,  
Do you too love them, now it is too late?*

*" Sidonian lute!  
Sidonian lute!  
Into the darkness dies the wandering music,  
And I remember the poignant you alone. . . ."*

## IV

Twice only in his life and hers they met:  
One meagre day, two fleeting nights;  
Flaming with meteor-lights  
Or where the grey rains set  
Their curtains to sway and fret;  
Once in the sun and moon,  
Once in the dusk and rain;  
Passionate once with June  
Singing a maddening tune,  
And once again  
Shadowed and hushed and strange with ghosts of voiceless  
pain. . . .

## V

*" Music! Music!  
I cannot wake you.  
For the Sidonian lute  
Has gone into the darkness;  
And now my fingers on the lifeless organ  
Fail; and I turn to memories alone."*

## VI

The dreary drizzle of white rain at last  
Broke, that June morning, into crystal air.  
Still round him clung from the three days now past  
A meaningless monotony of despair.  
For three days he had paced his paneled room  
And watched a beaten miry universe;  
While ever closer to him drew the gloom  
His desultory music could not pierce.  
Bedraggled passers, dripping beasts and carts,  
Infrequently and darkly plodded by  
Like desperate external counterparts  
Projected from his spirit's misery.  
The real world and the world of his own thought  
Had been a waste, blank and of bitter fate;  
And every chain of woven chords he wrought  
Had jangled off to chaos, desolate.

Now he looked forth, and saw the bays were white  
With the contagion of the wind's delight,  
And up the red cliffs of the coast  
The high foamed waves were tossed.  
Full of a cold and self-corrosive mirth  
He wandered forth  
Out of his lonely house; and straying down  
Passed through the scattered town

Whose uncouth streets and fishy smells again  
Struck discords in his brain.

Then as his brooding way  
Led round the headlands of a rocky bay,  
He saw ahead a little white-winged boat  
Aimlessly drifting,  
Just off the shore afloat  
Dipping and lifting,—  
In it an unknown girl who toward the land  
Stood gazing. And he watched her moveless stand  
And measure him with curious scrutiny.  
Then suddenly, with a gesture toward the sea,  
She broke the silence—"Will you come and sail with  
me?"

Her eyes were stranger than her words;  
Like the swift flight of young adventurous birds  
They sought the far horizon, and then turned  
Again to him with laughing look that burned  
Like June alight.  
She stood poised, slender, dressed in flashing white,  
Close to the sail, deep blue of sky around.  
And for a moment they gazed without a sound;  
Till, smiling to see him dumb,  
She shot the boat to the rock-edge of the land,  
Held out her hand,  
And said—"Come!"

Why should she mock him? . . . Then he knew  
Not mocking, but a crazy whim,  
Spoke in her words. And as the blue  
Of sea and sky swept over him,  
A flash of her preposterous mood  
Dispelled the lethargy of his brain.  
The summer wakened in his blood;  
He stumbled into life again.

“Come? Yes!” he said, “although I fear and think  
You are a mermaid, to some fishy brink  
Plotting to draw me down!”  
She laughed—“No, no! Behold, I have two feet!  
I am indubitably a mortal and complete.  
I will not let you drown!”

He came; she loosed the fluttering sail,  
And out across the bay they soared.  
No speech,—for what could that avail  
Here where the wind and sea were lord?  
He marvelled at her laughing glance,  
Her careless and imperious way;  
And thought—“For once, a kindly chance  
Brings me a madcap holiday!”—  
And to the whimsy of her jest  
Became a full conspirator.  
The boy within him, long repressed,



Awoke to match the girl in her.  
Their eyes that turned from sky and wave  
Met sometimes with a comrade-smile,  
And sometimes with a wonder, grave  
Of speculation. And the while  
They rushed through waters lifting strong  
Bright spires of foam into the sun;  
Across their cheeks the wind's keen song  
Dashed till they felt its trumpets run  
Along their veins, an heroic shout;  
And to each other smiled again  
As the boat's prow dipped in and out  
Of crested breakers down the plain.

Her blowing hair was like dark mist  
Hiding sometimes her eyes and brow  
And delicate curve of cheek; her wrist  
And arm moved white, holding the bow  
With tiller hard into the gale.  
The rondure of her throat was bare,  
And half her shoulder, cloudy-pale,  
Behind its covering glimmered there.  
Her eyes were touched with steady light.  
As league on league swept rushing by,  
Amid the friendly fierce sea-might  
Each glance became a glad reply  
Of spirits from the tangled days

Released to meet in boundless space.  
He watched her swift and eager ways  
And changing lights across her face;  
And caught her fire,— the flush of one  
Fled from the cities to beguile  
A tired heart, where wind and sun  
Could charm her for a little while  
With simpler touch of primal things .  
And blot away the echoing feet  
And intricate importunings  
Of life too crowded and too fleet.

Remote seemed all the wonted faces —  
They were adventurers of the wind.  
They swept into vast unknown spaces —  
How far the day-world lay behind!  
The tumult of the waves began  
To drown them in mad minstrelsy.  
He seemed no more a brooding man  
But a sure Triton of the sea;  
And she behind her stormy hair  
A water-wraith, a lightning-child,  
A creature of the driven air  
To earthly living half-beguiled.  
Onward they sped, into the wide  
Circle of restless seas and skies.  
He drew more close, and at her side

Felt the blown spray whip in his eyes.  
Were they above the waves, or under?  
What matter, so they both could go?  
She turned and looked at him, with wonder  
Lighted, like golden foam aglow.  
Her eyes had drunk the sunlight wholly;  
There seemed no real world to forget;  
And their hands touched and closed — and slowly  
Their hesitant perturbed lips met.

Then were Titanic powers astir  
Under the skies.  
He clung to her  
And she to him; their hands and eyes  
Were locked in spell  
As if each would some dawning miracle  
Discover or foretell,  
As the whole force  
Of tumult gathered in its whitening course  
Earth, sun, and sea.  
He crushed her recklessly —  
Her tremulous lips  
Whirled his lost brain into a blind eclipse —  
And when he saw again, it was to behold  
The loose white fold  
Of her gown slip from off her bright  
Shoulder, and the gold might  
Of the sun showered it with triumphant light.

And then  
His head sank down against her naked breast —  
With desperate arms he pressed  
Her slender quivering body, drawn again  
Closer to him, and thunderously knew  
The winds that shook her being through and through,  
And knew her cry for him, as thus maddeningly they  
    strove  
In storm of love.

. . . Suddenly, as one  
Awakening from a dream,  
She shivered, and turned . . .  
The madness was gone;  
The flame that burned  
A moment since, now on the stream  
Of some fresh current of her soul glided into the void  
    away.  
Dimly he heard her say  
With tortured smile —  
“Not that, not that! Oh let us only be happy a little  
    while!”

And he released her; and without a word  
Onward they sped  
Toward where the westering sun its cataract poured  
On waves ahead;

Baffled and chilled and full of fear  
Whither the way might tend,  
But knowing well that this dumb struggle here  
Was not the end.

VII

*" Oh troubled music drifting down the twilight  
With flutes and cymbals of some old confusion,  
Lighting the darkness, striking across the darkness  
With flame of voices and tumultuous breath!" . . .*

## VIII

That night the sun went down at last  
When evening in a blaze of gold  
Sank behind amethystine veils.  
Drifting along the bays they passed  
With faint airs breathing and manifold  
Whispers amid their tranquil sails.  
And high above the cliffs, the moon  
Her naked silver majesty  
Above this hush of glowing June  
Unveiled to haunt the sleeping sea.  
And they were tranquil,— even they  
Who late in such a storm had tossed  
Now musingly in dusk of grey  
Sailed up the long line of the coast.

Now he had come to know her face  
And see the delicate moulding there  
Where intricate thoughts had carved their trace  
Of fineness more than merely fair —  
The scarcely hollowed cheek, the eyes  
Of never-resting eagerness,  
The wide white brow,— seemed deeply wise  
Behind their glow of youthful dress.  
Thoroughly wise, that face, and versed  
In what world, flesh, and devil meant;

And yet, for all it had rehearsed,  
Irrevocably innocent.—  
A child's face, almost,— one who played  
With dangerous toys for her delight  
And tossed sharp daggers unafraid  
Yet never stabbed her bosom quite.—  
The groves of Sidon seemed to stir  
Beyond the shadows of her hair.  
An ancient sadness circled her  
With light that fallen queens might wear.  
Her cool and pallid beauty bore  
No likeness to the summer's blooms;  
It breathed of myrrh from some far shore,  
Of secret winds, of rock-cut tombs.—  
A face that from the lighted crowd  
Might haunt a lonely passer's thought  
And whisper where the streets are loud  
Forgotten musics he had sought.

And yet amid the silences  
Came doubts of ominous intent.  
He felt astray in mysteries,  
Unsure what this adventure meant.  
Beyond her sweetness, siren-eyed,  
Beyond her unrevealing smile,  
What strange chimera shapes might hide  
Of proved debasement, daring guile,



As of some mere adventuress,  
Some Babylonian, shrewd to spice  
A fundamental wantonness  
With moonlight of mock paradise?

Then as her voice across the dark  
Came, slender, modulated, cool,  
He knew his fancies for the stark  
Perversions of a skeptic fool.  
He knew that whatsoever lord  
Of flame or chaos ruled in her  
Was brother to the flashing sword  
Of the high rebel, Lucifer.

There was a tenderness in the night;  
She seemed no stranger to his eyes.  
He talked unguarded with delight  
And caught the throb of her replies.  
He followed where her laughter led  
Up airy flights of some conceit,  
And all the low-toned words she said  
Chimed individual and sweet  
Within his mind. Of dreams and men,  
Cities and songs, that they had loved  
They gravely argued, laughed again,  
Echoed and answered and approved.  
He long had moved in middle air,  
Not quite a denizen of earth,

Weaving his wandering music there  
Where meteors come to flashing birth;  
And now this secret region, dumb  
And icy to the general heart,  
He saw with wonder, was her home . . .  
Wherein her spirit moved apart  
Upon some ever-baffled quest  
Of beauty, happiness, or all  
That can allure the mortal guest  
To leave the mortal festival.  
And he, who late had solely known  
The call of her enraptured blood,  
Now felt her spirit and his own  
Freed in a luminous quietude  
Wherein even her loveliness  
Seemed but the secret minister  
Of the live soul intense to press  
Out through each line and hue of her.

In the wide silver glow  
Over their empty ocean shed  
They drifted into silence. Then he said —  
“ We, strangers, know  
Each other strangely well tonight.  
But this is a faery-land afar.—  
In regions of the common light  
I wonder who you really are? ”

She smiled a little.—“You I know quite well,  
And your high grey monastic house  
Looking down on the coast.  
And how each summer you dwell  
There like a hermit, with forbidding brows  
And eyes in dreaming lost!  
And that from out the organ’s sleeping keys  
You summon visions and spells and mysteries.  
But I,—the words would tell  
You nothing; for of late  
I have thrown aside my old self and old name  
And the old world that I had come to hate.  
No, this is faery-land; you must not claim  
To know my earthly fate.”  
And he asked nothing further, being content  
To dwell a while in her enchanted maze  
By delicate sweetness lighted through and through.  
He knew not whence she came nor where she went;  
And who she was, even in the later days  
He never fully knew.

Oh night of wonder! Down the wide  
Slow-heaving flood they slowly passed.  
She seemed a dream-shape; at her side  
He only hoped the dream might last.  
Each shadowy headland came to loom  
Like a great monster, till the tide

\*

Swept them around it, and the gloom  
Turned silver on the farther side.  
Hour after hour they slipped along,  
Silent or speaking as they willed.  
The night seemed gloriously long  
And with a dream's long wonders filled.

At last the reddening moon hung low  
Over the water; and its glow  
Was a wide track of broken light,  
A pathway for them down the night —  
Till it sank; and on the deep  
An impenetrable veil of sleep  
Seemed spread above the quiet foam,  
Save where, in the gigantic dome  
Of dark, the stars' slow pageantry  
Wheeled in solemn glory by.

Then for long they never spoke.—  
Until, far eastward, broke  
A faint light through the dark,  
And the swift, stark,  
Bewildering dawn began to come  
Mysteriously cold across the foam  
From the remote horizon. They leaned out  
From the little boat  
And felt the coolness of the stirring air,

Speculatively marking where  
The sun at last would lift  
Its rim. They seemed adrift  
As in the first dawn seen by the first man,  
It was all so vast, so measureless, so new.  
She shivered, and drew  
A little closer to him; and then his frame began  
To tremble also with some inward power  
Awakening slowly.  
She turned and looked at him; the unearthly hour,  
The silence, the lone world, suddenly seized them  
wholly,—  
And with a cry, throwing aside the weight  
Of the confused night's obscure history  
And all the wisdom of the day now past,  
Upon their lips came the salt sting of fate;  
And the irresistible flood of bursting light  
Swept them with sacred might  
Out to the dusky passion-shaken sea  
Of each other's arms, each other's breasts at last. . . .

When the sun came  
With clear flame,  
She, dumb but smiling, turned toward shore;  
And where, the day before,  
She had found him, steered along the edge  
Of the rocky ledge.

He kissed her lips and shoulder, and stepped forth  
To the real earth.  
Then out unswervingly through the blue heart of the  
    bay  
She sailed away.

## IX

*"Over my organ-keys in the twilight  
Slowly, aimlessly, wander my fingers,  
Impotent now to build, from the muted  
Notes and broken sequences and diminished  
Chords, an echo of you.  
Chanting slowly now in the deepening darkness  
Rises the host of implacable memories.  
Into the darkness dies the wandering music,  
And I remember the poignant you alone."*

## X

He sought his house, and flung himself upon the bed  
And slept.

Within that darkened room, all day, around his head  
Wild shadows kept

A ceaseless troubled watch; vague dreams

Flickered and died; he drifted

Down endless winding streams

Beside her, silent; and then was lifted

Suddenly up into tempestuous air

Where he and she were hurled

Headlong across the spaces of the world

In terror and confusion of all thought.

And then she was gone; and he in torture sought

Her vanished form down deserts, and down streets

Of multitudinous cities clanging loud,

And seemed to find and lose her in the crowd

And come on her once more where traffic meets

Cross-streaming traffic. There one look of hers

Would light his heart,— then she was gone again,

Swept by the eddy of trampling hosts apart

From the starved hope of his despairing brain.

When he awoke

Out of this troubled drowse, more trance than sleep,

An ashy yellow light of sunset broke



Across the sky; and under it the steep  
Huge slopes of leaden clouds along the west  
Were stretched, with dull fire smouldering in their breast.

Then as the dusk fell over the still sea  
And a vast emptiness hushed the twilight space,  
He walked the heights, a slave to memory,  
Seeking the contours of her vanished face.  
This should have been a light adventure, cast  
Into the void when parting words were said:  
Why did the troubling echo of beauty last?  
Why was he dreaming, now the hour was fled?  
On every breeze he almost caught the tone  
Of her low voice; and every curve of bough  
Recalled a sense of beauty that was gone.  
She seemed so far, and he more lonely now.  
Along the coolness of the evening air  
Stole the sweet coolness of her delicate cheek;  
And all the perfume of her showering hair  
Drifted from darkness on him. He grew weak  
And lonely as a child to have her stroke  
His hair with some small pitying caress.  
His memory now seemed powerless to evoke  
One clear-cut aspect of her loveliness.  
Where was she now? he wondered. Did she brood  
Now in some waste of agony and shame,  
Finding beyond the night's delirious mood

Only regretful ashes of spent flame?  
Humiliation and distrust and hate,—  
Perhaps these thoughts companioned her tonight . . .  
Could he but see her! — speak his sense of fate  
That once in all the years had wrought aright!  
Could he but kiss her quiet forehead,— bring  
His thanks for loveliness that saves and frees,—  
The night should drift above them on hushed wing  
And loosened tears flow in the silences.

Then down the night drifted a jangling sound  
Of laughter as his heart revived its fears.  
What if he were the dupe of some profound  
And facile guile,— and all his starting tears  
Were wasted at the feet of one who now  
Whispered this tale to some fresh worshiper  
Down the smooth floors where suave adorers bow,  
And ready mirth flamed up to circle her?  
Clumsily, doubtless, he had played his part,  
Unversed in gallantry, too deeply stirred.  
He seemed to hear her mock his dreaming heart  
And ape his smile and quote his fatuous word. . . .

And then he cursed his skeptic heart, intent  
To ruin every flower with blight.  
That haunting music was no dream that went  
With silver footsteps down the night!

Some luminous recollection came to kill  
The spectres of his doubt and his distress;  
And well he knew, tonight she was grave and still  
Under the shadow of lost loveliness.

Like a white bird gone over the white wave  
She gleamed before his thought that followed her.  
Delicate, subtle, lonely-hearted, brave,  
She had come to him, a young deliverer,  
A goddess from the foam. Now down her track  
His heart pursued with longing and despair;  
And knew, not all his passion could bring back  
The murmur of her voice, or her dim hair.

His lips were quivering with her cool soft lips.  
His hand stretched out to touch her carven breast.  
Below him in the harbor sleeping ships  
Filled him with hatred of their dreamless rest. . . .  
Then to escape the alien majesty  
Of the white planets wheeling slowly by,  
He turned and entered to his paneled room  
Where few lights hazed the gloom.—

And over his organ-keys all night  
His fingers strayed, searching through shifting mazes  
For her and for the echoes of her delight;  
Tracking her up the stair of singing keys,

*AN APRIL ELEGY*

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Through vaults and naves of sound,  
And deep into sepulchral crypts profound,  
And into sudden flights through sunlit air,  
And through pale hazes  
Of moonlight, dreaming above waters wide  
Where music drifted like an ancient tide  
Over a sea-washed city, or where on high  
A rock-perched swan beneath moon-flooded sky  
Poured out its heart in desperate melody.

## XI

*"Into the darkness dies the wandering music —  
Into the darkness again dies the wandering music,  
Echoing you, echoing you alone."*

XII

At last  
After long weeks that kept him still astir  
With memories of voices faintly heard,  
At last  
There came a written word  
From her.

. . . " And all day long,  
And all the after night,  
You were with me like the cadence of a song  
I had half-forgotten. And I tried to write,  
But there were people around me, every hour;  
And on the following day there were more and more.  
And when at length I was alone, my power  
Of speech had left me; I was tired, and bore  
The weight of silence,— as I have done before.

" Tonight I sail — tonight upon the sea  
I shall surely think of a thousand things unsaid  
To tell you. Oh, send your love after me!  
I do not know what lies ahead . . .  
The ocean, yes, and Havre,— and then at last  
My dear Paris, where all my youth was passed  
In exile. Now, returning, it seems home.  
I do not go to paint.— Do you know Vendôme,

And Blas, and Browne, and Wallace, and Hélène Cou-  
dray? —

I do not go to work,— only to play  
With them and all the others. Yes, I go . . .  
Goodbye, oh lover dearer than I could know!

“ Our day and night was flawless — that was why  
I said good-bye  
So suddenly —  
Fearing some act or word  
Might rise to break its beautiful accord.  
Yes, I was passionately afraid  
That if you stayed  
With me for nights and days we would tarnish even  
That unique heaven  
In which for one glad hour our feet had strayed.  
And yet,— when you were gone  
I wept, for I seemed very much alone.

“ Now everything around me  
Is tangled, doubtful, beautiful, insecure.  
My dear, you found me  
In a strange hour, too exquisite to endure.  
And now — my thoughts are dizzy for want of sleep,  
And far too many people round me keep  
Moving and moving restlessly —  
And yet I would have it so, poor foolish I!

" Good-night! Tonight the moon's adrift  
Upon the little winds that blow  
Over a sea without a stain.  
Here is my love for you: — poor gift!  
Perhaps,— who knows? — I do not know,—  
I will not see you again."

Dull pain of loss throbbed in him; now she seemed  
Herself a moon vanishing down the west —  
Not the great flaming light he late had dreamed,  
But a lonely slender wraith, stealing to rest.  
Gone! — and no more of what had been so much . . .  
Why must the splendor pass so swiftly by?  
Her words, like lingering of a farewell touch,  
Drew out his heart to follow miserably.

Days passed . . .  
He turned at last  
Into the ordered life he long had known.  
Dreams came  
And April flame  
Awoke, as when a smouldering coal is blown,  
With memories of her. Yet he somehow moved  
With steady step along the common earth,  
Unwilling that a chance wind he had loved  
Should shake the oak-trees of more ancient worth.



And scarcely would he then unto himself confess  
How perfumes, textures, curves of loveliness  
Swept him sometimes,— till he cried out to her,  
Belovèd comforter.

At length,— not weeks, but months,— one penciled note  
Came to him from her. Thus she wrote —

“ Oh I am happy today, my dear!  
This is a miracle-day!  
If you were here and I were here  
We'd quickly run away —  
Out to the Bois, to a charming inn  
That you, too, surely know,  
Deep in the wood, where the city's din  
Never dares to go.  
And there we would sit us down to dine  
Like Babes in love in the Wood,  
And be, with our goblets of yellow wine,  
Too happy to be good!

“ Ah well!  
This is no age to ask a miracle! . . .

“ I have not written a letter for so long?  
My dear, it would have been a mournful song  
I should have piped! You see, I have been trying  
To become happy — and I started wrong;

At least it all ended in only crying . . .  
Also I have been tired, horribly tired. — And yet  
Have I? Today I am so glad, surely I can forget. . . .

“ Oh such a day! Adorable! The sun and the cool  
air  
Over the city spread a dream: at Armenonville, where  
The Bois is charming, it must be quite maddeningly fair.

“ I wish that you were here to play — with me: you play  
so well.  
And if you were here would you play? Or will you never  
tell?  
I do assure you that tonight I am most playable!

“ Stupid of you! — I want to talk,— and you are far  
away!  
Perhaps next Spring you will come to me, some other happy  
day?  
But we shall be other people then . . . Life mocks us . . .  
Who can say? ”

His pulse leaped at the laughter in her words;  
Joy swept his memory back to the perfect hour  
Of their sea-love; her charm in echoing chords  
Of sweetness thrilled him with prophetic power.

How he had needed her! Now, when the sun  
Revived the happy music in her blood,  
She turned to him, by touch of joy made one,  
Sure that his heart would answer to her mood!

And then  
After a week she wrote again —

“ At last! — the quiet hour I have desired! —  
And yet I am disconsolate, being alone.  
I am so tired!  
But now that they are gone —  
The noisy company — and dawn is near  
I am a-quiver with the fear  
Of loneliness; my heart is like a stone.

“ I am alone, and lonely.  
That seldom happens now.  
If you were here, would you bid me take a vow  
Of rigorous seclusion? Oh if only  
I could regain, in some inspired mood,  
Courage for solitude!

“ Tonight as through the gardens  
Of the Luxembourg we trod  
I knew I did not like my hat  
And that there is no God.

"Don't hate me, oh my wisest, best!  
Tonight be kind to me!  
By all the world's futility  
Tonight I am oppressed,—  
And I,— I am the Supreme Futility.

"Have you seen how ridiculous  
Up in their queer vague sky  
The stars look from the city streets?  
I saw them tonight. . . . Good-bye!"

Her shadowy pain fell on him. Was it all,—  
Life's multiplex adventure and longing quest,—  
But the procession of vain carnival  
With no calm hour wherein the soul might rest?  
And when at last concluding night should fall,  
Was not perhaps the holy silence best? . . .

He moved in a troubled dreaming  
As the months thereafter passed.  
Wild notes from the void came streaming  
To wreck each pattern he cast.  
Till at length into the grey  
Dusk of a winter's day  
A letter came to fill  
The twilight, and lead him away.—

“ Everything is so different with me now !  
I am too happy and too drowsed to write.  
I am alone,— in bed ;— the candle-light  
Flickers beside me. I cannot tell you how  
Tranquilly, beautifully the world’s a-shine  
In spite of wind and beating gusts of rain  
That sweep tormentedly against the pane  
Of these dear rooms, these dear, dear rooms of mine !

“ For these rooms are my liberty ; they are wholly  
Sacred and secret to my soul and me.  
I have fled to them from the melancholy  
Whirl of the sick world’s phantom gaiety.  
Too long I have been like a leaf of Fall  
With mournful haste from revel to revel whirled.  
But now I am the happiest heart of all !  
I have regained my freedom from the world !

“ How much I wish that you could see my rooms !  
They are high in an old house, with lofty walls  
And mullioned windows. There are gentle glooms  
Across them when the evening sunlight falls  
Golden out of the west most tenderly.  
And the great city stretching far below  
Grows but a distant doubtful dream to me  
Into whose mazes I shall never go.

*AN APRIL ELEGY*

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" Winter is passing by me ; soon the Spring  
Will make these skies a sapphire bubble clear. . . .  
I wonder if its new-born life will bring  
You by some miracle to see me here?  
You must, you must ! I will put on my best,  
And be your guide through each minute, divine  
Cranny and corner of this tower of rest,  
These wonderful belovèd rooms of mine.

" Tonight I have so much to say  
To you, you only ; so much more  
Than ever on any other day  
To any mortal soul before.  
But you are far from me. . . . I fear  
My pen is impotent and dumb . . .  
So much to say — and you not here !  
Oh ! will it last until you come ? " . . .

## XIII

*"Under my touch the old impetuous music  
Revives and cries a moment in the darkness,  
Broken and wandering, with sudden echoes  
That circle forth and seek for you alone."*

## XIV

That night out of his loneliness there grew  
With slow deep strength a sense within his heart  
That he must see her at whatever cost.  
All other life seemed pale; at length he knew  
Its tangled wastes unmeaning, here apart  
From her he had so swiftly found and lost.

Restless, unhappy, daring, unconfined,  
He felt her well to be.  
An obscure warning flashed across his mind  
That before,— yes, and after,— she  
Had turned to other lovers. What were these  
For him to hold as stain?  
He loved her! — loved her subtle flashing brain  
And her body's ecstasies.

Truly he judged her reckless, wild,  
Unstable as a faery-child,—  
Fatal and fickle and possessed  
By demons that could never rest  
In any love that he could give. . . .  
And yet — how sweet it were to live  
A while in her exotic spell  
Of rapture! — while the miracle



Of love enthralled them,— while delight  
Of her wild body lit the night  
And her wild flashing spirit shone  
Magical — till the hour was gone.  
They with clear eyes and hearts awake  
Might in their hour of April take  
A day,— a month,— a year,— and bless  
The gods for so much happiness.  
For surely was that spirit wise  
That hid behind her laughing eyes;—  
Surely that spirit well did know  
How the great miracles come and go,  
And how the soul to death addressed  
Must hail and speed the uncertain guest!  
Perhaps she, too, was starved to cast  
All shames, and in his arms at last  
Become with him a soulless free  
Mad nymph and faun in Arcady,—  
Reckless, unmemoried, and gay  
For this their pagan holiday.  
Beautiful pagan that she was!  
He saw her slender whiteness pass  
Down valleys in wild laughing race  
While he pursued, and the glad chase  
Narrowed and closed, and panting fast  
He clasped her in some dell at last.

Oh beauty, beauty called to him  
Out of her maze, unsolved and dim  
Of good and evil; and her name  
Across his darkness shot its flame.

And then he grew to picture her  
With him above the city's stir  
In her high rooms, at twilight hour  
Looking down as from a tower  
On mortal life,— they two alone  
Into one hour's completeness grown;  
Touched with the sense of fleeting days,—  
Life's sweetness, life's dear lingered ways,  
Where for a moment, hand in hand,  
Across the singing summer land  
Of youth, two hearts may seek and hold  
The rainbow's far incredible gold  
And bid the daylight-world go by,  
Content with their sole ecstasy.  
He saw them wandering through the loud  
Bright laughter of the midnight crowd  
At other hours, delighting then  
To feel the mysterious stream of men  
Swirling around them, now a part  
Of the great city's infinite heart.  
And other days,— they drifting far  
Down the small waterways of the Loire

Or Indre, where men are less than dreams  
Upon the narrow willowed streams.  
Perhaps they would grow simple there  
Amid a world so mild and fair,—  
Forget the intricate sodden maze  
Of city nights and city days,  
And blunder into peace, and be  
Forgotten in felicity!

A dream! A dream! . . . Yet in a world  
Whose verities in mists are furled,—  
Where nothing is secure or plain  
Save the realities of pain,  
It seemed no madness. And the might  
Of this gold vision came to smite  
Its image on his brain; he felt  
All fancied barriers break and melt.  
And on a midnight when, alone,  
His grey walls chilled him to the bone  
With vague sepulchral prophecies,  
And far away the wind-swept seas  
Howled on their rocks, he suddenly stood  
Transformed, and in adventurous mood  
Knew her the meteor of his night,  
Knew her his April of delight,  
His flute of Spring, his golden west,  
His sea-born and beloved breast.

And in that night with terrible powers astir  
He wrote to her.—

“ I am coming now,  
For I cannot be longer without you.  
I am coming now,  
And this is what my heart cries to you.—

“ Sidonian lute!  
Your breasts are lilies  
Cooled by the dawn —  
Your brain is lit  
With summer lightnings —  
Your thighs are sleeping music . . .  
Sidonian lute! —  
Pale lute awaiting  
The musician's hand! —  
Oh give me peace  
From insupportable echoes. . . .

“ Tonight —  
This night before the summer —  
Through which great winds  
From remote storms  
Rush secretly,—  
On this night  
I am drowned in your fragrance —

Devastated by you —  
Mad with your memory. . . .

“ Be merciful!  
I kiss the ground before you,  
I hold you in my arms  
As a slave holds a pearl.  
I am not I —  
I am your shadow  
That tracks you endlessly  
Through star-swept spaces.  
You —  
Whose brain is lightning —  
Whose breasts are lilies . . .  
Sidonian lute!  
Sidonian lute!  
Whose breasts are lilies  
Under the moon.”

XV

*" Over my organ-keys in the darkness  
Slowly, aimlessly, wander my fingers,—  
Slowly, aimlessly, silently, wander my fingers;  
And I remember the poignant you alone."*

## XVI

At the dim head of the long winding stair  
She waited, doubtful; the one gas-light's flare  
Left the dusk round her shadowy and astir,  
But outlined her  
Sharply above him. As that flame  
Touched into life her unforgotten face,  
He paused, and could not speak her name.  
And she from her high place  
Looked down, and knew him,— silent a moment's space,—  
And then swiftly she cried —  
“ Why did you ring? Come, wanderer, inside,  
And see my wonderful rooms! — wonderful they were to  
be,  
But some inertia has laid hold of me  
And I have never done the things I planned.  
Here a Thibetan altar was to stand,  
And here my giant divan, one foot high,  
Broad as the sky,  
And covered with stripes of yellow and grey, indeed most  
marvelously!  
But you are here, and nothing yet is done . . .  
Turn, let me look at you, far-wandering one! ”

They sat upon a bare couch in that room  
Vast and high-ceilinged, where the tender gloom

Of night was broken only by soft glows  
From candle-shades of yellow touched with rose—  
Sat and talked swiftly lest some strangeness come  
Out of a pause of silence and make them dumb. . . .  
With hungry eyes, he watched the quick moods chase  
Each other across the sweet curve of her face,  
And watched her turn and lift her eyes and smile  
And speak and listen and look at him the while  
With a bright friendly eagerness that was  
Between them like a wall of shining glass.  
There she sat,— beautiful, tender, within his grasp,—  
And yet, for all his strength, he could not clasp  
Her to him. An unsolved remoteness hung  
In veils around her; and her eyes, that clung  
To him, seemed searching for some difficult art  
To thread the maze of his and her own heart.

They took each other's hands.—  
“ Yes, you are you,” she said;  
“ And yet one understands  
How for a moment strangeness will be shed  
Between us as we speak; and only slowly  
Shall we regain sense of each other wholly.”  
As they talked on  
At first some part of her seemed changed or gone;  
But then her voice would poise on a certain tone  
With the old sweetness,



So that he knew she had not grown  
Into another; yet some obscure completeness  
Quite unremembered hung around her;  
And a year's power had carved her delicate face  
More intricately than when he first had found her,—  
Shadowing forth out of their secret place  
The gods and demons in her spirit furled  
That made her *her*, unmatched in all the world.

“How long, how long it has been,”  
She said; and to her questionings, then he told  
Of the wide year and what had passed between,—  
What labors he had ended, what manifold  
New tasks he had begun; and how it seemed  
That now at last the fame which he had dreamed  
Someday should come to him began to shed  
Its grateful warmth around his head  
That had so long, lone and unhonored, bent  
Over his organ-keys. Her delicate listening lent  
To the dull tale a glamor,—made it glow  
With more fulfillment than he had dared to know;  
And all the long endeavor now seemed sweet  
As he laid down the story at her feet.

“And you?” he asked. But she  
Only smiled at him softly, silently —

Then said—"I have written you letters! . . . No more, just now, of me."

And then she took  
From the low stool beside her a thin book  
Saying—"Rest: you are tired"; and he lay  
Upon the divan where she sat, her stray  
Hand in his hand; his head was on her knees,  
And thus he half embraced her; but wide seas  
Lay unexplored between them. As she read  
Her hand crept to his head  
And idly touched his hair  
With as much quietude as the wandering air  
Might so have used. The delicate candle-light  
Drew round them a small circle, with the night  
Empty, tremendous, thunderously astir  
Beyond the small oasis where they were,—  
Beyond the little isle of glow where he and she  
Lay side by side, sundered immeasurably.

And very far away  
Seemed that tempestuous day  
When they had met. Not at the place where last  
They had parted could their spirits now embark,  
But from a dark  
And unknown spot.  
They had come by separate paths to a new land:

Now they must stand  
Doubtful in alien regions, and discover  
What world this was,— whether of friend or lover  
Or utter stranger. And his hopes' bright wings  
Sank baffled, beaten, lost amid this mist of shadowings.

XVII

*" The music is silent now  
In alien darkness.  
And the Sidonian lute  
Is silent in my soul.  
Insupportable echoes  
Drift from the alien darkness,  
Crying of you,  
Crying of you alone."*

## XVIII

At last she too  
Desperately knew  
That the words of her reading brought  
Neither to him nor her meaning or thought  
Or the inevitable painful speech they sought.  
And throwing aside the volume she bent down  
And, with a little frown  
Lit by a smile, said to him tenderly —  
“It is not what you thought that it would be?”

Pressing his shoulder closer to her side,  
Striving to dull the loneliness of the hour,  
He said — “Dear one, you know I cannot hide  
From you that I have been a puppet in the power  
Of an unearthly dream so long,—  
Have been so long haunted, in toil or rest,  
By memories of your sweetness, and clear song  
Born of your lips, born of your maddening breast,—  
That I am dizzied. Yet I understand  
That there is nothing for you now to say.  
See with what friendly calm I take your hand!  
Let us be happy today!”

She turned her face aside —  
It seemed, a moment, that she would have lied

Some intricate bewildering lie,— and then  
She turned again  
With frank pained eyes, unguarded and oppressed.  
“ I know that it is best  
To tell you what I can,” she said,—“ to tell  
What little can be told of this mad miserable  
Heart that you know so small a portion of,—  
A heart that cannot rest, not even in love . . .”

She paused; her eyes grew fathomless: but he broke  
The silence, and spoke —  
“ Dear, dear, I love the tortured soul of you,  
With curious fires fretted through and through;  
The intricate homeless passions I divine  
And all the longings that have been as wine  
Drawing your spirit another way than mine.  
And I ask nothing of this history.  
Let it be mystery  
To my dull brain — turn only and look at me.”

And she, turning, with quiet voice and slow,  
Said, as out of some depth of long-ago:

“ Dear, have you hoped to find me  
As in our sea-spell mood?  
I cannot look behind me,  
Stranger to certitude.

If happiness could but bind me,  
Or beauty daze my blood! . . .

“ Ah, will you understand? . . .  
How can you know this strange hand in your hand,  
Or think me other than more perverse, more vain, than  
shifting sand! . . .

“ I was utterly mad when you knew me  
That first wild summer day.  
I loved the swift winds that blew me  
So wholly their way.  
That hour in its curious fashion  
Held wonderfully more  
Of beautiful summer-born passion  
Than any before.  
I think that I loved you . . . but after,  
What was I to do?  
I drowned in renewals of laughter  
My longing for you —  
Seeking new flashes of summer  
And singing and light . . .  
But now my song has died; I have grown dumber  
Than a desert at night.  
I needed you, I wanted you,— but broken  
Seem now my eager wings . . .

I scarcely understand what I have spoken,  
These troubled things."

He answered her — "I think that now  
You are tired by your baffling nights and days  
Moving on barren ways.

I see your brow

More shadowy than it was.

But this will pass —

Pass, and the sun returning glimmer through

Its clouds to you.

Till then, a quiet pilgrim at your gate

Let me but wait."

"Is it so hard," she whispered, "to understand  
That no old summer can return again?

My heart can never dwell in a beloved land;

It wanders far away, in rapture or in pain,

And has its only strength in never seeking rest

For days or years on any human breast.

It must go crying

Up and down all the ways of the world, denied

That simple dying

Into mere peace by which alone it could be satisfied.

It cries for happiness, and each new wonder

In spite of distant thunder

Shines in the sunlight for it; and it takes: —

Then the earth shakes



And the skies darken about the sun  
And the hour is done.  
And onward down its labryinths my soul must move alone.

“ You were my happiness: but now . . . My dear,  
How you must hate me! . . . I am as one dead! . . .  
Our madness has gone from me; I am here,  
But my old joy is fled.  
I am tired, tired, tired; the fevered day  
Treads close upon the heels of fevered night;  
I have thrown the sunshine and the stars away,  
And whirled from vain delight to vain delight.  
My dear, I am sorry . . . It is the spite of Fate . . .  
But I am useless to you; you come too late!”

And he said —“ Come away!  
Somewhere there waits a new and fairer day  
To set you free.  
Let us go down into dear Italy,—  
Florence, Ravenna, the groves of Sicily,—  
And be together in each lovely spot  
Until you have quite forgot  
Your weariness and fever; these dead things  
Shall seem to you but old imaginings.  
This room, where I had thought to find  
The Eden of my dreams, shall slip from mind  
Wholly; and we shall be glad children again,  
Playing beneath a sun that knows no pain

Nor any memory of the dismal rain  
Of these dark northern cities, where too long  
Your heart has stifled in labyrinths of wrong  
Until, poor bird! it has forgot its song."

She listened; and there flickered on her face  
A flush, a windy light; she raised her eyes  
And searched his look, as though she hoped to trace  
Beyond his words some gate of certainties,  
Some spirit-portal flashing to her own  
Its authenticity, to which her fears  
Might flee secure. . . . Then the brief light was gone;  
And forcing back to ebb a sudden tide of tears,  
She only shook her head  
Smilingly, gravely, and said —

"I am tired, tired, tired; no fresh rapture  
Can wait for me. It has all been vain before! . . .  
The butterflies I chase are broken by capture;  
The vista pales as I pass through each door.  
I have ruined all the fair sweet things around me;  
I have poisoned every flower that once I had;  
All who have loved me in the end have found me  
Cruel and base and profitless and mad.  
Sole of them all, I mourn to see your going,  
Yet have no power to hold you at my side.  
I dreamed of you, once, by some magic growing  
Into my friend, my lasting friend. I lied

Then even to myself. What friendship ever  
Could cling to me, who am so little to trust? . . .  
You will go from me: I desire it! Never  
Shall anything but hate spring from love's dust."

She let him lift  
His head from off her lap, and look her in the eyes.  
He said — "I am not swift  
To find a hatred ready to my hand:  
Love stirs and cries  
Even through this dusk I cannot understand,  
Even through the silence of this desert land  
Where we are wandering now. My very dear,  
Oh hear  
From one who loves you, your own true report,  
Of other sort.—

"I think of you as of some jar  
Moulded in days and lands afar  
By an Egyptian potter, whom  
Dawn, and the secrets of the tomb,  
And desert-spaces, and the stars,  
And doubt, and dreams, and life's fierce wars  
So haunted that with curious hand  
Around this urn he wove a band  
Of intricate lovely tracery —  
Illusive shapes that half-defy

One's vision:—spirits winged and proud—  
Monsters as formless as a cloud—  
High gateways of dull carven gold—  
Sphynxes with cruel eyes, and cold  
Pure water-nymphs. And many a face  
Inscrutable and fair found place  
Amid this pattern:—doubtful gleams  
Of figures fainter than faint dreams—  
The eyes of fear, the hands of lust,  
The wings that flash above earth's dust.  
And, finished, then he sealed inside  
A perfume into which had died  
Lotus and jasmine, honey-flower  
And myrrh, from many a rose-hung bower  
In Cashmere or in Samarkand.  
And as its slender outlines stand  
Before me now, my thoughts are lost  
In marveling at the cruel cost  
That made this beautiful tortured shape;  
And from its perfumed heart escape  
Such bitter-sweets of mystery  
That I must love it till I die."

She laughed, with half a sob behind her tone.  
"Oh dreamer! Had I known  
That thus you held me, I would never have let  
You see my face again,—never have met

Your mad, mad picture of me  
With stark reality . . .  
How shall I find a spell  
To make me over into the miracle  
That you have dreamed?  
But, oh my dear! before you came, it seemed  
That my prophetic fancy almost knew  
What your wild hope would be . . .  
— I will do anything that can set you free  
From the unreal desire that witches you! . . .  
I thought, at first, to meet you as you wanted —  
Meet you with open arms and calling lips —  
Trusting the picture that your heart has haunted  
Would wane and die, under the slow eclipse  
Of beauty in the torn storm of mere passion  
Which still along my body your touch could wake.—  
Aye, even now I can change,— in other fashion  
Be with you, be your lover,— for your sake  
Slacking the thirst, ridding you of this vision  
Of you and me as white gods on a hill,—  
Change love to calm and longing to derision . . .  
If you choose, take me! . . . I will do your will ” . . .

And a swift momentary brightness then  
Swept through her eyes,  
As though an authenticity, long lost to her, again  
Was born out of the dust of old uncertainties

As Springs are born from snows, as flowers are born  
from dust —

Sweet, frank, unguarded,—like the tender and sacred  
breast

Of such a mother-love as can transcend the lust

Of its beloved, offering sanctuary and rest . . .

Or like a desperate weary spirit, driven

To yield its outer walls, in last vain sacrifice given. . . .

Yet as she poured on him this light, there grew  
A wider wonder in her face —

A flickering dream, a passion, that she too

Could by some magic word of his, some triumphing look,  
retrace

The labyrinth, and come swiftly again

To regions where old doubts of forest-lairs are slain,

And only splendors of wild wings sweep the sun-flooded  
plain. . . .

And he was silent, and on her shoulder

Laid his head, where the drooping dress

Down from the slender arm and throat had crept.

His heart was colder

Than snow, save that her delicate tenderness

Stirred in his soul so gently he could have wept.

And he said only—"No. . . .

It shall not be so." . . .

Her face paled, and a sudden weariness came  
Into her eyes;  
As though hope died then that his reckless flame  
Of passion might with glorious surprise  
Rekindle the grey embers: thus the last light went;  
And she returned with tender voice to the old argument.

She said — “ Oh are you sure?  
Think not that if you suddenly went mad  
It would be but a penance I must endure. . . .  
I could be glad  
And eager with your madness a little while —  
My lips could smile  
And my heart leap! —  
And then, as out of sleep  
We might hear echoes from a lovelier deep  
That once we knew,— whose shores I can no longer  
keep. . . .”

“ It is enough; the dream is done;  
The hour is over . . .” he said; and walked to where  
Beyond the window the slow rain had begun  
To blur the black night air  
With greyness; and he watched the rivulets run  
Down the dim street  
Beneath the cold lamps' light,  
And heard the hurrying feet  
Of some late passer in the solitary night.

And then at last he turned  
Back to the circle where  
The soft light burned  
In rose and topaz on her cheek and hair.  
And with the wind and rain  
Monotonously astir  
Outside the pane, quietly sat and endlessly talked with  
her.

They talked quietly, slowly,  
As friends for a long time parted,  
As lovers whose loving was over. . . .  
The hour grew tranquil and holy.  
Once more she seemed the clear-hearted  
Girl he had dreamed of as lover.  
They were shut in by the sleeping  
City around them wide,  
Curious vigil keeping  
Side by side. . . .

And in that pause, when the great stillness lay  
Desert-like round the low dim words they said,  
His vision swept to regions far away,  
And a wide glow across his sight was shed.—  
He seemed to see the whirling hosts of heaven,  
Star after star, through endless voids of dark,  
Each down its own gigantic orbit driven  
Splendid and white and stark;



He saw the earth, that small dim troubled star,  
Whirled in terrific dance amid the rest,  
Swept by the tides' and by the seasons' war,  
With earthquake-fires still threatening in its breast;  
And on its surface in tumultuous droves  
The passionate eager straining race of men,  
Rapt in their labors, panting in their loves,  
Dreaming, and dying into dreams again. . . .  
And he beheld themselves: — bright spirits come  
From earth's mysterious chemistry,— for a space  
No longer dead, no longer blind and dumb,  
Looking with human face on human face.  
Here hand in hand and lip to eager lip  
They might forget the irony of their doom,—  
Possessed of happiness, before should slip  
This one short hour into its waiting tomb.  
For this was their hour, never to come again,  
Never to sweep her eager heart and his  
With these warm floods of human joy and pain  
Mid candle-light and shadowy mysteries.  
Strange life now for a moment filled their veins;  
Strange death withheld its stroke a little while;  
Now the world's chaos, its grim wars and pains,  
Lay far apart; now they could meet, and smile,  
And clasp each other,— lonely spirits lost  
Amid time, space, that doomed them to defeat;  
By hostile waves on this small island tossed

For this hour wholly sacred, wholly sweet,—  
To touch each other wonderfully, know their  
    hands,  
Their brains, their bodies mingled in delight,—  
Drawn from the limits of the farthest lands  
To this one spot, to this immortal night!

But they,— he seemed to see,—  
Who soon must die, never again to be  
In any future time, on any other star  
However far,  
This passionate tragic human two  
That this hour knew,—  
They thus in the obscurity of pained thought  
Desperately sought  
Question and answer, and with intricate speech  
Perturbed themselves, and each to each  
Opposed vague subtleties of mind  
And wandered blind. . . .  
Ah, for a moment an overmastering hate  
Rose in him against her whom he had late  
Loved passionately well,—  
Hate for her, that she could not, would not break  
The spell  
That bound them, and awake  
Their own authentic ecstasies to leap  
From this entangled nightmare-sleep,

And claim

Here on the very edge of death their April hour of flame.

He saw the sweetness  
Of life, youth, love slip by them  
Momently.

The ultimate completeness —  
That did those powers deny them  
Into which all things die. . . .

## XIX

*" Sidonian lute!  
Whose broken strings  
Tremble in the darkness,  
Echo in the darkness —  
All other song grows mute  
At your low murmurings,  
Hushing my haunted keys  
With dreams and silences."*

## XX

It was all like a dream to him, soon to be fled,  
Those shadowy hours when they talked or were still.  
But luminous flashes of what she said  
Came back to him still.—

“ My wonder-hour is over,  
The hour in which I loved so recklessly.  
And you,— dearest of all my April lovers,—  
Think not too ill of me!  
I, too, have dreamed,— would that I still were dreaming,  
If only for your sake.  
But round me lights are gleaming  
Of icy dawn, and I have fallen awake. . . .

“ My heart is wise: I cannot take your hand  
And seek with you the quiet happy land  
Of mere contented love that some hearts know.  
Yet I am too distrustful now to go  
Back to the glittering regions I have known  
And be a spent leaf blown  
In that unquiet gust  
Of swift illusion and the moment's lust. . . .  
My heart is as a stone! . . .  
And in the universe I am alone,

And none can help me. I must go  
Toward some devotion that I do not know.  
Strange! after all the seekings of the past  
To find it is myself I need at last! . . .

“As if in nightmare-dreams, I now recall,  
I have poised delicately lest I fall  
From dangerous heights where I kept carnival —  
Poised in a terrible dream of fear. . . . Now I have  
fallen awake — and that is all. . . .

“Oh hate me if you must!  
I have betrayed your happiness and trust.  
But, dear, back to myself I could not choose but go.  
And I pass from you lonelier than you know.”

And then it was, he said —  
“If you were dead,  
You who have made me happy and tortured me  
With your inscrutable soul’s perversity,—  
Then I  
Would weave around your name such golden song  
As to no other woman might belong  
Through all of history.”  
And she replied  
Doubtfully, tenderly,—  
“Would that I long ago had died!

For you, dear, I would die, save that the test  
Would rob you of more rest  
Than even my perversity of now.  
Dear one, how painfully that vow  
Would haunt your sleep forever!  
No, for your sake, I will forbear to sever  
The blue vein here; and though I cannot smile  
With quite the madness that I once could use,  
Surely I needs must choose

• To save you from your oath, and live a little while! ”

The rain came down  
Quietly, steadily, over the town.  
They sat, silent; he dreaming of the lays  
Whose coronal of praise  
He would have woven for her were she dead.  
Death-watch he seemed to keep —  
For she had fallen asleep,  
Resting upon his shoulder her quiet head.

XXI

*"Faint-breathing music!  
Beyond your peace are whispers  
Haunting the darkness.  
Far wandering music!  
Into the shadows  
Your chantings die."*



## XXII

Outside the window the rain slowly ceased;  
And over all the housetops in the east  
The mists divided slowly; the East grew grey;  
And very far and low, a golden ray  
Smote upward from the approaches of the day.  
She opened her eyes; together they watched it grow,  
And without speech thought of the long-ago  
Dawn on the bosom of the summer sea.  
Then again suddenly  
And wearily  
Her head drooped to his shoulder, and she said —  
“I am tired, tired to dying. Carry me  
For once within your arms and lay me on my bed.”

He lifted her slight lifeless form, and bore her  
Down the long corridor to where, beneath  
Its towering canopy, the white bed stood.  
He lit the candle on the stand before her,  
And as she lay in syncope, the sheath  
Of gown took from her body, in such mood  
As might a husband decking his dead spouse  
For burial, and freed her sandalled feet,  
And spread the great gold coverlet on the bed.  
And in the emptiness of the silent house  
Looked down upon the lids troubled and sweet,  
And softly kissed the dark smooth drooping head.

She smiled a little and put out her arm,  
Bare, beautiful; and drew him down, and kissed  
His hair.

"You have put me safe beyond the reach of harm,"  
She whispered. "I was so tired that a mist  
Seemed to come down upon me unaware.  
Good-bye! — I hope a long and last good-bye! . . .  
And may you never hate me utterly!"

"Hate you!" . . . . And then he felt  
All barriers melt  
Within him like an ice-bound river in Spring.  
A sudden madness flamed in him; he knelt  
Desperately by the bed,— then rose to fling  
Himself upon it; with starved arms he pressed  
Her long smooth body in a fierce embrace;  
He buried his face  
Against the delicate softness of her breast —  
And cried — "You whom I love! what matters all the  
rest?  
This, this is yours and mine,— this, this is best!"

And she stirred wildly in his tightening arms,—  
At first as with alarms,—  
Then, changing, clung with a fierce freed agony.  
She clasped his head more closely to her side  
And from the shaken depths of her being cried —  
"Yes! — Yes! — Yes! — let it be!"

Then as he turned, dizzy with his delight,  
Dreaming now at her side  
To enter the golden hour of long ago,  
He saw an ashen light  
Sweep through her eyes,—bewildered, he saw her hide  
Her face from him; and suddenly she cried—  
“No, no, it cannot be! You will hate me—but go!  
    . . . . go! . . . .”

And she sank back with drooping lids, and seemed to  
sleep, or slept;  
While into the bright alien day, out of the silent house  
he crept. . . .

.

## XXIII

. . . " *A mystery of music on the keys —  
A ghost of doubts and dreams and silences. . .*

*" Over these keys, dim in the deeper darkness,  
Slowly, hopelessly, silently wander my fingers,  
Impotent now to awake an echo of you.  
Chanting slowly, chanting with far-off voices,  
Rises the host of implacable memories.  
Into the darkness dies the unborn music;  
And I remember the poignant you alone.*

*" This, strange and dear one,  
This hour of memory is the only song  
That I can ever make  
For your pale coronal.  
I would not do you the deep wrong  
Of striving now to wake  
Where grey rains fall  
A measured artful voluntary of praise  
Whose strains should die on the bewildered ears  
Of those who thought you base  
Or of a trivial worth.  
For my own solace, thus I bring our days,  
Our vain days, from their shroud of smiles and tears,*

*Back for a little while to light the uncomprehending  
earth.*

*"Sidonian lute!  
Still tremulous with music. . . .  
Sidonian lute!" . . .*

## **SEVEN JAPANESE PAINTINGS**



## I THE PINE BRANCH

*A Painting by Kenzan*

**A** PINE-BRANCH stretches out  
Across the silence. . . .

. . . Grey silence, untroubled  
Until this living thing  
Smote it into music. . . .

The void is restless now.  
Silence shall be no more.  
Greyness shall be no more,  
Nor any peace.  
For a singing curve and color  
Have entered the vast dwelling —  
A life, singing  
Of the suns and the snows.  
Now the old gods tremble  
In their timeless halls;  
Now the far halls beyond Orion  
Are shaken with music.  
For this chord, living,  
This soul that knows not peace,  
This dream-dust — stretches out  
Across the silence.



## II PINES ON A MOUNTAIN

*A Screen by Yeitoku*

**R**ED pine-trunks!  
Immutable pines!  
Pillars upright under the grey sky!  
Pillars upright over the chasmed earth! —  
Upon these snow-heights  
Your downward-sloping branches  
Point toward the human world  
Remote and troubled.  
But here on the ultimate ramparts  
Of the winter hills  
Your huge columns  
Rise toward bleak heaven —  
Like an indomitable procession  
Of warriors, dark, green-crested,  
To whom the snows  
Are only wine and trumpets,  
To whom the winds  
Are only battle.

### III THE WAVE SYMPHONY

*A Screen by Sotatsu*

**A**ROUND islands of jade and malachite  
And lapis-lazuli and jasper,  
Under golden clouds,  
Struggle the grey-gold waves.

The waves are advancing,  
Swirling, eddying; the pale waves  
Are leaping into foam, and retreating —  
And straining again until they seem not waves  
But gigantic crawling hands.  
The waves clutch at the clouds,  
The near and golden clouds;  
They rise in spires over the clouds,  
And over the pine-branch set against the clouds.  
And around the islands,  
Jasper and jade,  
Their rhythms circle and sweep and re-echo  
With hollow and foam-crest,  
Infinitely interlacing their orbits and cycles  
That join and unravel and battle and answer,  
From tumult to tumult, from music to music,  
Crest to trough, foam-height to hollow,  
Peace drowning passion, and passion  
Leaping from peace.

#### IV BUDDHA APPEARING FROM BEHIND MOUNTAINS

*A Painting by Choga*

TWO hills meet —  
Two dark green hills.  
About their shoulders  
Silver mists cling.

Slowly the gigantic  
Face of the Buddha  
In massive presence  
Looks over the hills.  
Tranquil his brow, unsmiling his lips;  
Filling the whole sky with his haloes of glory,  
He broods in a dream of gold.  
Measureless peace sleeps on his golden forehead;  
Measureless compassion  
Weighs on his eyes.  
Yet as I look  
It seems that his terrible hidden hands  
Even now are stirring  
To rend apart the hills —  
To divide the corrupt and cloven earth  
For the triumphal entry of his burning form.

## V DREAM OF A CHINESE LANDSCAPE

*A Screen by Soga Shubun*

MISTS are rolling  
Over the grey mountains,  
Over the quiet waters  
And marshy shores,—  
Rolling up into valleys  
Where pagodas rise,—  
Rolling over slopes  
Along whose crests  
Monasteries dream.  
Wild geese soar  
Above the marshes  
In downward flight —  
In flight from unknown shore  
To unknown shore.  
Over all  
Mists are swaying.

The shadowy bridge  
And wandering roadway,  
The dark gnarled tree by the road  
And the pale tree afar,  
Are touched with doubtful mists  
Or emergent from lifting mists,—  
Trembling in mist; born of mist; shadows. . . .

88    *DREAM OF A CHINESE LANDSCAPE*

O mountains, shores, and streams!  
Beautiful transient illusion!  
Mortal world, dream world,  
Vanishing into mist, into mist only!

VI DREAM OF A CHINESE ROCK-  
PROMONTORY

*A Screen by Sesshu*

**A** CROSS quiet waters, far off  
Faint misty mountains unfold in limitless ranges,  
Guarding some dream-world,—  
Some dim tranquil world of golden pagodas,  
Lawns and pools, terraces and deep groves,  
Vermillion palaces, and peacock-haunted gardens.

That is afar:  
And the quiet waters lie between.

But here,  
Immediate, insistent,  
Rises out of the quiet water  
Stormily, ridge by ridge,  
Buttress by buttress,  
Cliff beyond cliff beyond cliff,  
The jagged headland.

Here,  
Gigantic, primeval,  
Juts the grey promontory.  
It is bleaker than death, though temples deck it;  
Starker than ice, though pines bestrew it;

Inhuman, though the village at its base  
Humanly nestles.

With writhing turrets,  
With dizzy gulfs,  
With winding abysses  
And cloven brinks,  
The rock rises  
In ripples, in waves, in spires —  
It rises fiercely, with an appalling passion,—  
An apparition of dark monstrous life,—  
And foaming up at last to its highest crest  
Stands frozen  
To freeze the blood of generations.

## VII THE GOLDEN SYMPHONY

### *A Screen by Sotatsu*

**G**OLDEN clouds, and a golden bridge  
Lifting in a great arc, swinging in a high arc,  
Under clouds of gold, over clouds of gold,—  
From the long slow curve of a golden shore  
Across wide spaces of dark river! . . .  
And behold! a drifting miracle —  
Behold the long steady advancing prow  
Of a golden boat, heavier than the sun,  
Quiet upon the dark river; bearing two lovers  
In robes of state, intricate, luminous,  
Upon this dim river — where the great arc  
Of the bridge from clouds into clouds  
Swings, from golden shore to golden shore,  
From the gold earth to the gold heaven!





## LYRICS



## NOVEMBER NIGHT

**A** CRYSTAL night! — with moon and the clear wind  
Through tree-tops! On the lately-frozen earth  
Silence has come, and end of the loud flaunt  
Of Summer. Now the crueler powers possess  
The fields and hills; now the corporeal bloom  
Yields to mere beauty, and the golden grass,  
The scarlet leaves, take empire.

What a throne,—  
This season of waste fruitage! Through this night,  
Empty except for the high sailing moon  
And the fierce winds that in long reckless sweep  
Tear at men's doors,— through this clear shaken night  
A ghost might walk as on the battlements  
Of Elsinore, and a new Hamlet speak  
With no surprise to him. The trembling branches,—  
Bare, desolate, impossible as home  
Of nesting birds,— like a Cimmerian lace  
Sway in the winds. . . . Did not a poet sing  
"O Moon of my Delight!"— how long ago  
He sang that! But this keen tempestuous hour  
A different moon lives.

Oh white night! with moon  
And clear wind through the tree-tops! Icy night,  
That had no fellow till I came to you!

## *EIGHT SONNETS*

### I

**W**HEN all our troubled search for joy is done,  
And faiths and lures alike have lost their sway,  
And but the intricate body rots alone  
To prove the pride and daring of our day;  
And if we won the happiness or lost  
Is now no matter anywhere; and unswerved  
The seasons roll, indifferent to the cost  
Of pageantries we ruled or pains we served;  
Then of the gladness whose attainment was  
So serious business when we lived and sought,  
Perhaps some faint and ghostly flush shall pass  
Out of a vase or song or tower we wrought  
And rest one moment upon men as blind  
As we were, bent on joys we leave behind.

## II

I trust the young; who, dreaming, shall awake  
On sudden Springs and capture, fluttering by,  
These gleams of memory,— capture them and make  
Old lights to flicker on new wings that fly;  
Then such a dreamer shall in one bear fruit  
Of all that from our million Junes could live,  
From pulses quenched, lips even whose dust is mute,  
Joy whose so mighty part was fugitive.  
He shall inherit us; and, not yet come  
Into the full enthrallment of his day,  
Vicariously shall thrill with many a bloom  
Of Springs a world, a thousand years away —  
The moment's mirror of our final light  
In infinite dust vanishing down the night.

## III

The old? We are the old. And now we know  
How the fresh mirror dims with passing time.  
Not for us rise the carven gods, or blow  
The haunting musics; not for us the rhyme  
Of dreaming singers, nor the lights that drift  
Faintly through dusks, nor hopes that once had stung.  
We mumble down our pathway, making shift  
To mock the unstable visions of the young.  
We mock them, tell them they shall yet be wise;  
We point and peer at clods and stones and trees  
Beyond where Helen, living, past their eyes  
Drifts white, and Jason breasts the darkening seas;  
And flout our early love-songs, vain and cold  
To eyes so certain and to hearts so old.

## IV

Because of this we die; because of this  
Wise Nature calls us toward the facts we trust  
And clears her stage for later mysteries  
By yielding us the tangible couch of dust  
Where we shall doubt no more, being quite content  
With the one kindly ultimate certitude  
Far from the minstrel paths down which we went  
Where new hopes waken and new dreamers brood.  
We, silent in our vested sepulchers,  
Trouble no more at sense or daze of those  
Within whose eyes the great illusion stirs  
And through whose hearts the joy of beauty blows  
Its flickering light and music from the deep.  
They have the light and music: we the sleep.



## V

It is not known; so certify it not  
With august oaths and pious mysteries.  
Before all prophets, prophets now forgot  
Spoke different truth, and others before these.  
Sun rises and sun sets; the seasons pass;  
The child is born and grows and lives and dies;  
Sometimes unearthly beauty lights the grass  
And sometimes storms fill the whole darkened skies.  
There are such days as make men wish to live  
Forever in their unreceding light;  
And there are hours that drive the fugitive  
To clutch the kind robe of eternal night.  
And where beyond these things man's faith has flown,  
Wonder! — but warrant not. It is not known.

## VI

Out of a small urn blooms the iris proud.  
Into a small urn Cæsar's dust can go.  
One marshy frog makes the whole woodland loud,  
And Troy turned ashes at a torch's glow.  
Today's great prophets shall depart where scorn  
Not even is vouchsafed them, quite forgot;  
And homages shall rise from men unborn  
To men we pass today, regarding not.  
My foulest deed to others seems most fair;  
My fairest song wakens a wondering nod  
From you, my friend. I smile when you despair,  
And worship chaos as you worship God.  
From these confusions, endless and unblest,  
Rest comes in death; and death at least is rest.

## VII

This strange importuning! This dull desire  
Claiming a pageant past its mortal day!  
Certain it is the earth shall end in fire  
Or ice, and our long toil be swept away  
Or pass so changed it bears no likeness then  
To that creation whose each line we proved.  
The statue's beauty and the deeds of men  
Have term, though nobly planned, superbly loved.  
Patience, my soul! whose indiscriminate greed  
Must grasp all measure or rejoice in none!  
The wise man takes the treasures of his need,  
Content to glow his small day in the sun,  
Nor bids the high and happy hour confess  
Its only warrant is its lastingness.

## VIII

Here in the daylight, where the singing mood  
Can sometimes light our lips, and sometimes come  
Love's ancient musics chanting down our blood,  
And sometimes stars wheel out when nights are dumb;  
Where hands may touch, and minds assault or fold  
Each others' or the world's most foul or bright,  
And hear the story of old kingdoms told,  
And onward dream through time's uncharted night;  
Here where a glory of imagining thought  
May light with blush the Galatean stone,  
And the heart's picture of the thing it sought  
For all the baffled bitter years atone —  
Lordly possessor of the far and near!  
Here is our home; our stage of dreams is here.

## MARCHE FUNÈBRE

SHE laughed, and then beyond her laughter said —  
“One thing alone consoles me  
As we enter middle age  
And pass onward  
To death:  
And that is our solidarity,  
Our kinship as together we all go down  
Into silence.  
For in some curious way I am reconciled  
By knowing how many have grown old before  
And died before; and that we shall grow old  
And die, all of us.”

And I thought —  
“Count me not of your number.  
For me there will be heavy loneliness  
Amid this company.  
Year by year  
Shall my old friends  
Seem ever stranger companions.  
I shall go onward with you all,  
Growing worn, growing tired,  
Accepting death  
Quietly at the end —  
And yet it will be as an alien  
That I shall move in your procession.

And always the white limbs of hurdling boys  
In Spring  
And the slim ankles of girls running through flowers  
And the sweet idiocy of youth's laughter  
Will be nearer to me  
Than are the old men and the old women  
And my own tremulous life, withering down."

## MOONLIGHT IMPROVISATION

**W**E laughed and mocked like idiot-things  
Beneath the sacred moonlight flood,—  
Beat at the delicate shadowings  
Of beauty with our skeptic mood.

And my harsh lips, that can at times  
Speak as the hearts of lovers speak,  
Wove for your laughter ribald rhymes;  
The deeper hush I dared not break.

And yet I knelt, as at a shrine,  
To the one godhead that I know —  
Watching you lift the long, divine,  
White arms of Helen, ages ago.

Slowly I touched your breast: it was  
The gesture of old beauty, come  
To haunt, one hour, what soon must pass. . . .  
And we grew silent, as at a tomb.

## BONDWOMAN

**A**CROSS an ancient darkness  
I see your figure move,  
Too proud for my compassion,  
Too separate for love,  
Aloof and calm and lonely,  
Intent on ways apart;  
While I,— perhaps I only,—  
Questioned your heart.

Your heart despised its station,  
Too human, hence accursed.  
As of some fatal nation  
The sacrifice, you durst  
Disclose to no man ever  
The pulse that gave you wings.  
And you soared upward never  
From your shadowings.

From shadows you departed  
Toward shadows none can know,  
You, the high eager-hearted.  
But now when May-nights blow  
Their separate and lonely  
Low winds out of the west  
I think of you, you only,  
And your locked breast.



Gone: — and it shall not matter.  
The doom lies on the race.  
Earth like a glass must shatter.  
What of one vanished face?  
Nothing is worth the loving.  
Nothing has aim or end.  
Yet tonight my heart is roving  
Lonely, my friend.

## THE SECRET

**W**HY did you look at me today  
With questioning eyes?  
My hair is not yet touched with grey  
Nor am I wise.  
And yet your gaze was fixed on me  
As one who could to the infinity  
Of your doubt give replies.

True, I have written sundry books;  
To you I am old.  
And so you bring me terrible looks,—  
Bid me unfold  
The secrets of the heart of man,  
The rationale of the creation's plan,  
And a hundred things untold.

Once I kept peering in each face  
As you have done,  
Certain that someday in some place  
I should find one  
Who in his learned grace would speak  
And other men's conspiring silence break  
And tell all under the sun.

My hopeful friend! pass on; not here  
The oracle reigns.  
With the tempestuous passing of each year,  
The curious pains,

Pleasures, defeats, idolatries  
Of men to me grow deeper mysteries,  
And only wonder remains.

I in my youth was very wise;  
I could have answered then  
All questions burning in your eyes  
Of gods and men. . . .  
There once was one, the poets say,  
Who innocent of heart lived out his day;  
His strength was the strength of ten.—

And you perhaps shall be like him.  
Ah, that were good!  
And yet, I think, through caverns dim  
You will seek and brood  
And lay your traps for truth, and vow  
To catch the secret I cannot tell you now  
And would not if I could.

## PORTRAIT OF JOHN COWPER POWYS

### I

OLD salamander basking in the fire,  
Winking your lean tongue at a coal or two,  
Lolling amid the maelstroms of desire,  
And envying the lot of none or few —  
Old serpent alien to the human race,  
Immune to poison, apples, and the rest,  
Examining like a microbe each new face  
And pawing, passionless, each novel breast —  
Admirer of God and of the Devil,  
Hater of Heaven, Purgatory, and Hell,  
Skeptic of good, more skeptic yet of evil —  
Knowing the sick soul sounder than the well —  
We mortals send you greeting from afar —  
How very like a human being you are!

### II

Impenetrably isolate you stand,  
Tickling the world with a long-jointed straw.  
Lazy as Behemoth, your thoughts demand  
No cosmic plan to satisfy your maw;  
But as the little shining gnats buzz by  
You eat the brightest and spit out the rest,  
Then streak your front with ochre carefully  
And dance, a Malay with a tattooed breast.

### III

There are no sins, no virtues left for you,  
 No strength, no weakness, no apostasy.  
 You know the world, now old, was never new,  
 And that its wisdom is a shameless lie.  
 So in the dusk you sit you down to plan  
 Some fresh confusion for the heart of man.

## III

Lover of Chaos and the Sacred Seven!  
 Scorned of Midas and St. Francis, too!  
 Wearied of earth, yet dubious of Heaven,  
 Fain of old follies and of pastures new —  
 Why should the great, whose spirits haunt the void  
 Between Orion and the Northern Wain,  
 Make you their mouthpiece? Why have they employed  
 So brassed a trumpet for so high a strain?  
 Perhaps, like you, they count it little worth  
 To pipe save for the piping; so they take  
 You, weak, infirm, uncertain as the earth,  
 And down your tubes the thrill of music wake.  
 Well, God preserve you! and the Devil damn! —  
 And nettles strew the bosom of Abraham!

## *AN UNGODLY MAN*

**H**E cursed the church, he drank much gin,  
He followed wenches by the score.  
He was a man of utter sin.  
Our matrons turned him from the door.

His reputation was disgrace.  
He would not work, like other men,  
But strayed with mocking aimless face  
Over the hills and back again.

He made a rainbow glory grow  
As if old streets were regions new.  
Forgotten loves of long ago  
Touched an old woman whom he drew.

And with ten strokes of pencil stark  
He could evoke a tree of Fall  
Round which the gathering folds of dark  
Seemed swept in vast memorial.

He might have been a decent man;  
But some perverseness dragged him down.  
He flouted with deliberate plan  
The aspirations of our town.

We turned our backs on him; he laughed,  
And as to church we passed him by

He lounged beside his gate and quaffed  
His watered gin in revelry.

He died at last, of too much gin. . . .  
We are a Christian folk; and we  
Treasure, forgiving of his sin,  
His pictures for posterity.

## EPITAPHS

### *For a Prominent Citizen*

Here lies a penny  
That had been worn thin by use,  
And been run over by a locomotive,  
And was counterfeit to start with.

### *For a Rake*

Your songs  
That have been firelight to so many hearts  
And hell-fire to your own  
Here die  
Into the silence that holds Plato's voice.

### *For a Cross Man*

Everyone hated him;  
He hated himself worst of all.  
Now everyone has stopped hating him:  
And perhaps he has stopped too.

### *For a Noble Man*

Here lies an arrow  
That sped — Oh how it sped!  
And broke in mid-flight,  
Shattered by a sudden wonder  
As to where it was going.  
Three years later  
The worms in the grass had eaten it.



*For an Unfortunate Woman*

Here lies a lady  
Who married a poet. . . .  
She died.

*For a Happy Woman*

Beautiful dreamer!  
Now that earth whispers to you  
With its ancient kindness,  
Surely in this sleep too  
You shall find only beautiful dreams.

## *PORTRAIT OF A VIOLINIST*

**T**HE tropic body forever crying its needs  
And demanding its perilous splendors;  
The heart forever homesick and desolate  
Toward its inalienable kinships;  
The mind ceaselessly pushing on  
Its iron prow into the ice-fields;  
The soul, loneliest of them all,  
Weaving from their insistent clamors  
And adventures and defeats and triumphs  
An arabesque that shall have beauty,  
That must have beauty, or it die. . . .

## PORTRAIT OF THEODORE DREISER

**T**HERE were gilded Chinese dragons  
And tinkling dangles of glass  
And dirty marble-topped tables  
Around us, that late night-hour.  
You ate steadily and silently  
From a huge bowl of chop-suey  
Of repellent aspect;  
While I,— I, and another,—  
Told you that you had the style neither of Sir Thomas  
Browne  
Nor of Walter Pater.

And it was perfectly true . . .  
But you continued to occupy yourself  
With your quarts of chop-suey.  
And somehow you reminded me  
Of nothing so much as of the knitting women  
Who implacably counted stitches while the pride of  
France  
Went up to death.

Tonight I am alone,  
A long way from that Chinese restaurant,  
A long way from wherever you are.  
And I find it difficult to recall to my memory  
The image of your large, laboring, inexpressive face.  
For I have just turned the last page

Of a book of yours —

A book large and superficially inexpressive,— like yourself.

It has not, any more than the old ones,

The style of Browne or of Pater.

But now there are passing before me

Interminable figures in tangled procession —

Proud or cringeing, starved with desire or icy,

Hastening toward a dream of triumph, fleeing from a  
dream of doom,—

Passing — passing — passing

Through a world of shadows,

Through a chaotic and meaningless anarchy,

Under heavy clouds of terrific gloom

Or through ravishing flashes of knife-edged sunlight —

Passing — passing — passing —

Their heads haloed with immortal illusion,—

The terrible and beautiful, cruel and wonder-laden illusion

Called life.

## *BUTTERFLY*

**S**UMMER tonight! And just two years ago  
In summer you were with us. . . .  
I still can catch the echoes of the laughter  
And light and sweetness  
That made a ripple following where you went.  
Summer tonight . . . and you, beyond all summers,  
In the dry dust are lying.  
Incredible! . . .  
The summer brings your laughter back —  
As much a part of it as sun  
And clouds and birds.  
It cannot be that you are lying  
In the dry earth, forgotten.  
Something of you breathes in the wind,  
Something of you glowed in that sunset,  
And now in twilight  
The warm soft silence, almost happiness,  
Is wholly yours.

I have not known your like again;  
I shall not know it.  
A butterfly, men said,  
While you were here.  
But now they think of you —  
And wonder . . .

Oh warm heart, eager heart, full of the sun and  
summer —

Send back your rays upon us, clear and joyful,  
Love us whose love for your sake still is lonely.

## *PORTRAIT OF RUPERT BROOKE*

**O**NE night — the last we were to have of you —  
High up above the city's giant roar  
We sat around you on the studio floor —  
Since chairs were lame or stony or too few —  
And as you read, and the low music grew  
In exquisite tendrils twining the heart's core,  
All the conjecture we had felt before  
Flashed into torch-flame, and at last we knew.

And Maurice, who in silence long has hidden  
A voice like yours, became a wreck of joy,  
To inarticulate ecstasies beguiled.  
And you, as from some secret world now bidden  
To make return, stared up, and like a boy  
Blushed suddenly, and looked at us, and smiled.

## *A WATTEAU MELODY*

**O** H let me take your lily hand,  
And where the secret star-beams shine  
Draw near, to see and understand  
Pierrot and Columbine.

Around the fountains, in the dew,  
Where afternoon melts into night,  
With gracious mirth their gracious crew  
Entice the shy birds of delight.

Of motley dress and maskèd face,  
Of sparkling unrevealing eyes,  
They track in gentle aimless chase  
The moment as it flies.

Their delicate beribboned rout,  
Gallant and fair, of light intent,  
Weaves through the shadows in and out  
With infinite artful merriment.

Dear lady of the lily hand,  
Do then our stars so clearly shine  
That we, who do understand,  
May mock Pierrot and Columbine?

Beyond this garden-grove I see  
The wise, the noble, and the brave  
In ultimate futility  
Go down into the grave.



And all they dreamed and all they sought,  
Crumbled and ashen grown, departs;  
And is as if they had not wrought  
These works with blood from out their hearts.

The nations fall, the faiths decay,  
The great philosophies go by,—  
And life lies bare, some bitter day,  
A charnel that affronts the sky.

The wise, the noble, and the brave,—  
They saw and solved, as we must see  
And solve, the universal grave,  
The ultimate futility.

. . . . .

Look! where beside the garden-pool  
A Venus rises in the grove,  
More suave, more debonair, more cool  
Than ever burned with Paphian love.

'Twas here the delicate ribboned rout  
Of gallants and the fair ones went  
Among the shadows in and out  
With infinite artful merriment.

Then let me take your lily hand,  
And let us tread, where starbeams shine,  
A dance; and be, and understand,  
Pierrot and Columbine.

## IRISES

*A Print by Kiyonaga*

**W**HENCE flows this stream  
In which the iris stems  
Amid their sword-like leaves  
Rise in pale purple?  
From what far hills  
Comes the cool water  
Here swirling  
Into eddies and currents?

“ This water comes  
From my far homeland —  
From the far hills  
Where as a child  
I walked the crests  
And saw the sunrise  
That promised glories  
To my waiting heart.

“ But now my days  
Are empty of glories;  
And my nights are troubled  
With the passion of men.  
Life passes by me  
Like the passing water  
Of the cool stream  
Coming from afar.

“Last night there came  
Unto my dwelling,—  
Open to so many  
That all may come,—  
A silent painter,  
A man of dreaming.  
And when he left me  
In the cold dawn  
I slept, and dreamed  
Strangely of the far hills  
Misted at sunrise  
That I once had known,—  
Of my old country,  
The land of iris,—  
And I awoke  
And was at peace.”

## ARCADIAN NOCTURNE

**I** THINK how we watched on the river,  
In delicate nights of June,  
The plumes of the willows a-quiver  
With loveliness under the moon.  
Down through the silences gliding,  
Swept on the breast of the stream,  
The hills seemed too fair for abiding  
Longer than shapes of a dream.  
And the shadowy river slow-flowing  
Bore us in wonder away,  
Like the captives of faëry-land going  
To the dawn of a magic day.

I remember, through shadowy spaces,  
The notes of a far low flute.  
I see the white blur of your faces  
With beauty and longing grown mute.  
What we learned in those days has departed;  
What we felt,— shall it ever depart?  
In the deeps of our beings were started  
Strong fountains that nourish the heart.  
Whatever of dust and derision  
In these later years may be,  
Give thanks! We have known the vision;  
We dwelt once in Arcady!

## *QUARTER-MOON OVER ROCKS AND SEA*

**S**AVAGE red moon going down the west —  
Roaring waves on the rocks at my feet —  
Heart inscrutable in my breast —  
Here for an hour we meet.

The moon sinks slowly through distant veils,  
Fading, paling into a haze  
As the quiet flood of the mist prevails  
Over its flame of memorial days.

And the waves die down as night consumes  
Their passion by unresisting peace.  
Before the dawn shall their fierce white plumes  
Droop in the glassy tide, and cease.

I alone, I alone,  
While the sea grows quiet as sea-washed stone,  
While the moon turns dark as a burnt-out coal,  
I alone keep my soul.

## *THE GOLDEN SWALLOW*

**I** HEARD a maiden singing  
Down a valley, in the sun —  
“ April is beginning!  
I see the small leaves springing!  
And the winter’s done! ”

I saw a golden swallow  
Fly up out of the south.  
The sunlight seemed to follow  
Where he touched hill and hollow,  
With a gold leaf in his mouth.

Today new green will cover  
Each scar of winter ills.  
The night-bird has gone over.  
The loved turns to her lover,  
And light sweeps the hills.



## **CAFÉ SKETCHES**





## CAFÉ SKETCHES

### I

**H**ERE amid the night-lights  
Of the great city,  
With the laughing crowd around me  
I sit alone  
In one of those strange hours  
Walled in with solitude  
That are my lot forever amid these lights.  
Fronting the empty table before me  
And its cortège of seven waiters —  
Fronting the restless sea of unknown faces —  
I mourn for you, boundlessly curious lady,  
For you and for your esteemed consort —  
But for you chiefly.

Presently persons will come out  
And shake legs.  
I do not want legs shaken.  
I want immortal souls shaken unreasonably.  
I want to see dawn spilled across the blackness  
Like a scrambled egg on the skillet;  
I want miracles, wonders,  
Tidings out of deeps I do not know. . . .  
But I have a horrible suspicion  
That neither you

Nor your esteemed consort  
Nor I myself  
Can ever provide these simple things  
For which I am so patiently waiting.

## II

Base people!  
How I dislike you!

Some of you have come from Park Avenue,  
Almost as you might go slumming.  
Some of you have come from the suburbs,  
Almost as you might go to heaven.  
From Greenwich Village there are a few of you;  
God alone knows why you have come.  
And perhaps there are in your midst  
A few incredible two-headed beings  
From that mythical land of horrors,  
Hoboken.  
Also the traveling salesmen, mainly Hebraic;  
And the wide-eyed yokels from the little villages of Illinois;  
And the two young men-about-town  
Conscious of their new evening-clothes;  
And the three ladies  
Who are trying to pick up someone for the night.  
And the music,— Oh Christ and Mohammed and Buddha,  
the music!  
. . . Base people!  
How I dislike you!

Do you know why I have come here?  
It will not interest you; nevertheless, I tell you —  
I have come here to be alone.

## III

Strange little dancer whom I saw here once,  
You could leaven this lump.  
Where are you tonight? . . .

They were godly people, all of them,  
With whom I dined here  
That night of ours,—  
Substantial citizens  
With their virtuous wives  
And a stray daughter or two.  
And when I spoke my admiration of your dancing,—  
You, the little half-clothed painted cabaret performer  
Who was pirouetting before us,—  
They laughed a strained laugh,  
Wondering if the city had corrupted me.  
And it was only as the absurd voicing of a preposterous  
fancy  
That one of the virtuous wives said to me—  
“Why don’t you go over and dance with her yourself!”  
Her voice stung me,—it was so sure  
That to dance with you would be a shameful and un-  
pleasant thing.  
So I answered crossly—“For a nickel I would.”  
And one of the daughters,

Who doubtless suffered later for her evil act,  
Handed me the nickel. . . .

And that was how it came to be  
That you and I  
Before the gaping herd of my respectable fellow-townsmen  
Forgot the world.  
Light was the pressure of your hand  
And your body was as answering to my touch  
As is a little willow to the wind.  
I could not see your painted face against my shoulder;  
I forgot that you were clad in veils to lure the lustful  
crowd;  
The tawdry glitter of the hour faded and died  
As you and I soared up  
Upon the music.  
O soul of a bird!  
O cooling wind from the mountains of wild laurel!  
O dreamer of a pattern of whirling stars  
Down which we moved  
In dizzy orbits!  
Perfumes of Arabia were around us;  
Tremulous melody heard by none other  
Out of some distant garden poured in wild song.  
And there were lights in the air;  
And there were memories

Of forgotten Thracian hillsides,  
And madness, and oblivion,  
And a fierce white peace.

Then the dance ended. . . .  
And you were once more a little painted dancer  
In an ugly café  
Before a vulgar audience.  
So I led you back to your table  
And thanked you conventionally,  
And turned to go.— But a sudden impulse  
Swept me,—  
And in the sight of all the gaping respectabilities  
I turned to you again  
And kissed your passive, your strange, actual lips  
In recognition and farewell  
To that winged spirit which you late had been.



## IV

One night, long ago,  
As at this table  
I sat reflective,  
A girl came  
And took my hand  
And sat beside me.  
She was no creature of the roaring town,  
But a woman of breeding  
With young and delicate eyes,  
I had seen her sitting  
A long way off  
At a large supper-table with many others —  
Groomed men and richly dressed women  
And an elephantine dowager.  
Now, between the dances,  
She had strayed away;  
And with a wave of her hand to them,  
Signifying she had found a friend,  
She sat down and looked at me.

We did not talk.  
For I did not understand her coming,  
And she seemed to desire no speech.  
Then suddenly  
She laid her hands upon mine across the table

And whispered —“ I am so lonely!

I am so lonely! ”

And after we had looked at each other a long time in  
silence,—

Silence of doubt, silence of comprehension,—

She turned, and left me.

And now tonight

I forget this sea of faces. . . .

## V

Well, since there must be noise here,  
I too will make song.

I sing the imperial white shirt-front of the head-waiter,  
Snow-fields under a face of rock.  
I sing the pink stockings of the blonde dancer  
And the calves that are lyric inside them.  
I sing the quite human look of anguish on the face of the  
dancer  
As she just now tripped and almost fell.  
I sing the broiled lobster, once happy in the sea,  
Now most unhappy as it slides onto a fat lady's lap.  
I sing the lonely fly now out of some depths of midwinter  
Come to perch upon my discarded lump of sugar and  
leer at me.

Let me also sing the white-haired clergyman, eating by  
himself in doubt;  
And the girl with the up-turned nose, very charming  
under her shabby big black hat;  
And the lady with the down-turned mouth, looking like  
a hag under her tiara;  
And the impressiveness of gilt dining-rooms;  
And the lint-producing qualities of napkins.

And last but not least,  
I sing the cracker-crumb that has been in the corner of  
the mouth of the bus-boy for the last half-hour.

## VI

In a remote alcove  
Sits tonight  
One whom I know to be a poet —  
A great poet, but keyed  
In a pitch that is neither the world's  
Nor that of other poets.  
Once he was a keen knife of spirit  
Stabbing dull hearts;  
But now he is wearied out wholly  
Save for the brief renascence of the midnight hour.  
Across the table  
A pale, flame-lipped, very exquisite girl  
Looks at him with inscrutable eyes.  
Then, as his lips move —  
Then, as he leans forward —  
I see, I divine, that he says:

“Light-foot whisperer over the dark abysses! —  
Beautiful breast  
Never to be forgotten! —  
Evilly have you worked upon me!  
Now the orange floods of the afternoon  
And the watery green depths of the midnight,  
The vestal dawn  
And the scarlet screaming dawn  
Flicker with your passage!

" Glittering, gay, fantastic, unhappy child —  
You seem as old as the oldest sin of the world  
And as young as its newest rapture.  
You are to me fresh April,  
And the last days of October,—  
Honey, and myrrh,—  
The delicate dusk, and the stark dawn-light.  
I have expected you a long time  
With wonder and with terror;  
And now, with your kiss upon my lips,  
I await the miracle to result —  
Corruption, or transfiguration."

And she, having listened  
With inscrutable eyes and lips that were motionless,  
Drank the champagne in her glass,  
And looked curiously into the distance;  
While he went on:

" You have brought me a lost wonder  
And stirred in me a romance  
I had forgotten.

" Now I again see landscapes  
Clothed in their rightful mystery,  
And the dusk is again holy,  
And food is again sweet.

"Now I am alive  
Who was dead."

But her lips did not move,  
Not even with a smile.  
And then he said,  
While the violins sang with him:

"Lovely child — on your breast  
Could a head find snowy rest?  
Could the dizzy pulses cease  
And the madness take release?  
Yes! Yes! that I know —  
For I dreamed it long ago. . . .  
But, child, on what breast  
Shall *your* head find rest?"

She turned her eyes away from him,  
And her lips were as quiet as lilies. . . .  
Red lilies of a garden in Cashmere. . . .  
Then the dancers fluttered out  
Into the pools of the spot-light. . . .  
And she smiled.

## VII

Last night  
I saw these two,  
Or two like them,  
In the midnight streets.  
But before they came  
There came an apparition.—

It was a cab, worn, withered, and blighted.  
A man like a moth-eaten  
Archangel Gabriel  
Sat on the box of the crazy thing.  
Obviously it had been through Hell;  
But its inside was musty and threadbare  
As though companies of faded virgins  
Had ridden in it for generations.  
The horse, as you looked at him from the sidewalk,  
Staggered with all four legs;  
But to one sitting inside the cab  
He must have seemed so thin of beam  
As to vanish altogether.

The Archangel Gabriel was inclined to stoutness  
And wore a well-preserved Derby hat.  
He drove through the night incredulously,  
With vague haltings,



As if ready to be struck dumb  
Should passengers dare  
To accept his ciceronage.

Ah, the passengers!  
When they rushed  
Out of a grilled doorway and across the sidewalk  
Their white faces glimmered  
As though they would have accepted anything  
That could carry them swiftly or slowly  
Away from the insupportable  
Oppression of Here and Now.  
They bundled into the cab,—  
Four of them —  
Two, whose throats were wound with wire and silver,  
Being destined for destruction  
That the other two, with human throats,  
Might inherit the *Vita Nuova*.

Then suddenly the Archangel Gabriel,  
Leaving the Plaza and steering northwesterly,  
Drove his precarious vehicle to the entrance of the Park  
And straight down  
Into the depths of the sea.  
Through watery glooms  
And swift gleams as of wave-light,—  
Along alleys where vast forests of sea-weed

Aped the summer swaying of terrestrial foliage,  
The silent cab moved on  
And the midnight ocean closed around it.  
Huge branches of coral  
Inky or amber  
Lifted themselves in the gloom  
Like processional lamp-posts;  
And now and then a peering dolphin  
Poised questioningly beside the path  
Like a policeman.

Now they were gone beyond my sight.  
Slowly I followed them;  
But the sea retreated before me;  
I could not enter the depths of their traversing.  
And I walked as in a trance  
Pursuing the receding waters  
Down the avenues of lamp-posts,  
Of foliage, of policemen.

Then, after hours, years, ages,  
I saw my quarry returning;  
And the sea drew forward with it  
In a dark wave and swept over me.  
There was the cab —  
And lo! of the two ghostly passengers,  
One had become an undulant mermaid

And the other a surging triton —  
And they swayed in hollows and foam-heights  
Of the shaken water —  
Knees, hair, arms  
Tossed in confusion —  
They were spilled out upon the deep  
And the sea-birds shrieked above them. . . .

I think that they went then  
To the Sea King's Palace;  
But this is all  
That I myself saw.

## VIII

Streets everywhere,—  
Endless, labyrinthine, chasmy, crowded,—  
All leading through the Egyptian night of ancient black-  
ness  
To those oases of tables,—  
These howling dervish-tents,—  
These feasts of lanterns. . . .  
Strange altars of the midnight!  
Doubtful sanctuaries between wars!  
Perilous tombs of forgotten goddesses!

## IX

Once the altar was sacred ;  
But now, I think, it is the table.

For across tables  
Go the words, the looks, the blinding flashes of thought  
That are truly the race's history.  
Fellow-lovers and fellow-poets  
Lean their arms on these white surfaces,  
And bending forward oblivious above the scattered silver,  
Enkindle each other's souls.  
I have never got from a pulpit  
What I have got from tables.  
I have never been so stirred in the greenwood  
As at these curious urban trysting-places.  
Nor do I think that heaven itself  
Will wholly answer to my need  
Unless in obscure streets and squares and avenues  
And purlieus outlying the Pillared Place  
There are little cafés  
Where across tables  
Blessèd angels whisper wonderful and incredible secrets  
to one another.

**X**

I mark you well, my companions,  
Though you do not mark me.

To which one of you shall I go  
As the girl to me once came,  
And take your hands, and speak  
With silence across gulfs of silence?

Where in your midst  
Is the friend who might be mine?  
Do the pale blue veils of smoke  
So utterly hide him?

Life, like a restless wave,  
Has gathered us here together  
As pebbles upon a remote shore —  
Scattered when the next wave shall come.

## XI

Revelers!  
Strange revelers!  
All of us: you — and I.

From table to table we wander —  
Pausing for a moment —  
Tasting, appraising —  
Seeking the perfect drink  
And finding it never.  
There will come, before dawn, the hour of payment.  
There will come, pitiless, those secret corroding hours of  
    night-time  
When the mind, shaken to its deep foundations,  
Quivers and reels and poises on the brink  
Of disintegration. . . .  
And there will be, doubtless, a tomorrow,  
A terrible space of daylight and calm passage  
Of hour on hour, indifferent to our torture,  
Indifferent to the mangled nerves  
And to the writhing brain. . . .  
And then at last the slow descending magic  
Of night the limitless, of night the holy —  
And once again, in the old sacrifice,  
We shall from table to table doubtfully wander —

Pausing for a moment, passing for a moment —  
Tasting, appraising —  
Seeking the perfect drink  
And finding it never.



## XII

It is a chaos, this world.  
Therefore it rests me.

For I have striven long  
To create a world of my heart's desire,—  
To erect pinnacles of dream  
That should shine amid the sunlight,  
Giving intelligible form  
To the intentions of the earth.

And I am tired —  
Tired of my pinnacles of dream,—  
Both those that shine already amid the sunlight  
And those that shall never be upraised.  
And I descend  
Into this chaos, this real world of waiters,  
And it rests me.

## XIII

I have known so many waiters —  
Not intimately, but well.

There comes into being a relation  
Such as is possible with none other  
When a waiter, well-bred unto his duties,  
Stands beside his patron (also well-bred).  
There will be, I know, no intrusions.  
He will respect my privacy, and I his.  
And a perfect art-form,  
A complete conventionalization,  
Will be our medium of speech.  
"And for the salad?"  
"Lettuce with Roquefort, please."  
"One lump?"  
"None, thank you." . . .  
Meagre words, but sufficient.

And he, I know,  
Will with especial care  
Perform his limited function.  
And I, I know,  
Shall reward him with complete sufficiency,  
And say — "Goodnight,"  
And he will say —  
"Goodnight, sir."

Thus we shall part  
With mutual respect. . . .  
Oh God, if Thou art good,—  
In this wild universe of tangled torments,  
Where nothing is easy and clear and certain  
Or blessed with demarcation,—  
Where no communication seems  
True, comprehensible,—  
Oh God, if Thou art good,  
Before I die  
Make me a waiter!

## XIV

I too have been here with my gay companions —  
But I do not like it.  
For I love my companions with an inexpressible devotion —  
I love them better  
Elsewhere.

This is a place  
Of desolation —  
Of those who do not love  
Or honor one another —  
A purgatory, a hall  
That is entrance to the Pit,  
Whither many a one  
Will go from here.

Now I will rise,  
And taking with me the volume  
Of George Santayana, on the back of which  
I have been writing,—  
Taking my black-lacquer stick  
That is now almost famous,—  
I will pay the check,  
Forgetting not the waiter,  
And hie me to a friend, if I can find him;

Or failing that  
I will go home  
And in the awed gray dawn-light  
Read from Santayana's "The Life of Reason"  
In five noble volumes.

For this is a place of madness,  
And this city is doomed.

